



# GETTING THE PEOPLE PART RIGHT II

## The Human Resources Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy in 2015

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# Getting the People Part Right

Second Edition

The Human Resources Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy in 2015

By Ambassador Laurence Wohlers, Senior Fellow, Meridian International Center

*In partnership with*

Katherine Brown and Chris Hensman, U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy

# TRANSMITTAL LETTER

To the President, Congress, Secretary of State and the American People:

The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD), authorized pursuant to Public Law 112-239 [Sec.] 1280(a)-(c), hereby submits the report, "Getting the People Part Right, Part II: The Human Resources Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy in 2015."

ACPD is a bipartisan panel created by Congress in 1948 to formulate and recommend policies and programs to carry out the public diplomacy functions vested in U.S. government entities and to appraise the effectiveness of those activities. It was reauthorized in January 2013 to complete the Comprehensive Annual Report on public diplomacy and international broadcasting activities, and to produce other reports that support effective public diplomacy.

This report was completed in partnership with Ambassador Laurence Wohlers, a Senior Fellow at the Meridian International Center, who was funded with a grant from the Smith Richardson Foundation. The report's subject is especially important to the Commission. We greatly admire the tenacity and the talent of our public diplomats and we are encouraged by their reform-minded leaders. As the report states, the professionals within the State Department are our most important assets. If we properly support their career development, they are best positioned to operationalize public diplomacy strategy and build the relationships with publics who are so vital to our national security.

The report makes several short- and long-term recommendations for how to empower our professionals and to give them guidance on how to use public diplomacy to meet the various foreign policy challenges we face. We're grateful to the nearly 100 people who participated in this study and participated in interviews, focus group discussions and data collections.

Respectfully Submitted,



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TechGirls head to Hell's Kitchen Urban Rooftop Farming Project

**Meridian International Center** is a nonprofit, global leadership organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. We envision a more secure and prosperous world characterized by mutual understanding, innovation, economic growth, and inclusion. The path to realizing this vision is through more effective and connected public and private sector leadership at all levels. Our mission is to create innovative exchange, education, cultural, and policy programs that advance three goals: strengthen U.S. engagement with the world through the power of exchange; prepare public and private sector leaders for a complex global future; and provide a neutral forum for international collaboration across sectors.

**United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD)** has been charged since 1948 with appraising U.S. Government activities intended to understand, inform and influence foreign publics and to increase the understanding of, and support for, these same activities. The ACPD conducts research and symposiums that provide honest assessments and informed discourse on public diplomacy efforts across government. It reports to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to many people who supported this study. We especially thank leadership in the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs' Office of Policy, Planning and Resources (R/PPR) who helped us access vital information, in addition to the Human Resource Bureau's Recruitment, Examination and Employment (HR/REE) Office and Resource Management and Organization Analysis (HR/RMA) Office. We are also grateful to the Board of Examiners (BEX) Office and the Public Diplomacy Division at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). We also greatly appreciate the dozens of PD professionals within the State Department who made themselves available for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and the many stakeholders outside of government who represent artistic, cultural and educational communities.

We give thanks to the Smith Richardson Foundation, for funding Ambassador Laurence Wohlers' fellowship at the Meridian International Center. We're also grateful to the Meridian International Center's leadership, including, but not limited to, Ambassador Stuart Holliday, Amy Selco and Bonnie Glick.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on the human resources dimensions of U.S. public diplomacy (PD). Its purpose is to examine how the U.S. Department of State can improve PD's effectiveness by rethinking how we are recruiting and selecting public diplomats, improving their training and advancement, and strengthening their influence on policymaking. It builds from the 2008 ACPD report "Getting the People Part Right," updating much of the data on recruitment, selection, training and advancement. Yet the report also emphasizes that the success or failure of our public diplomacy activities also rests heavily on how we nurture and support them and create a leadership environment conducive to thoughtful and strategically-based public diplomacy. This is especially important as we aim to recruit and maintain new generations of PD professionals who come of age in an increasingly interconnected and wired world, and are eager to apply their knowledge and experience to connect with global youth on behalf of the United States.

**The Struggle to Define Public Diplomacy's Mission and Priorities:** A sample of more than 50 PD professionals at the State Department revealed an underlying sense of frustration that, while PD is closer to policymaking than ever before, there is no collective understanding within the Department on the mission and conduct of long-term PD and how it contributes to statecraft. There is, however, more clarity on the public affairs function, since senior leadership is inevitably focused on short-term messaging and crises. A comprehensive and inclusive strategy-development process for PD can mitigate the problems of blurred lines of authority for PD within the Department and the multiplicity of objectives that weaken PD effectiveness. Holistic resource support for PD officers, most feasibly based within R/PPR, is also vital to strengthening

PD implementation capacity. This report recommends:

- Create a structured but dynamic process for developing and implementing public diplomacy strategies that is rigorous, comprehensive and inclusive;
- Strengthen R/PPR as the office with a holistic oversight of the entire range of supporting resources for public diplomacy.

**Modern U.S. Public Diplomacy Staffing:** There are currently nearly 1,500 PD Foreign Service Officers who represent 19.5 percent of the Foreign Service. Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs is currently the fourth largest cone in the State Department, slightly behind the consular and economic cones and slightly ahead of the management cone. Yet as many as one-third of PD-coned officers at any given moment are not in PD assignments and the vast majority of PD officers are presently at entry and mid-level grades. This report recommends:

- Strengthen and institutionalize R/PPR's oversight role over PD HR questions;
- Develop a comprehensive approach to developing in-cone expertise at mid- and senior levels;
- Define the PD function's personnel requirements;
- Define a career path for Civil Service Officers.

**Recruitment and Selection:** Since 2007, 23,000 people have taken the Foreign Service exam and indicated their preferred cone as being PD. Seventy-five percent of the hires for the PD cone recently were over the age of 30, which indirectly

indicates some level of professional experience. Yet it is unclear how that experience was/was not relevant. The Foreign Service is framed by the generalist ethos of the Department that eschews recruitment based on specialized needs of each of the five cones. So while the Department spends roughly \$60,000 on recruitment per successful applicant, it does not recruit for PD skills, and other skills specific to cones. Currently, only one midlevel PD officer is represented in the Board of Examiners process, which selects officers. This report recommends:

- Identify public diplomacy-relevant skills for now and the future;
- Increase targeted recruitment for PD professionals;
- Review the Foreign Service oral exam to add questions demonstrating PD-like skills;
- Create a program to establish cultural, educational, or artistic Fellows in Residence;
- Develop incentives and encouragement for PD officials to serve on the Board of Examiners (BEX) earlier in their careers.

**Training and Education:** The generalist nature of the hiring process places a considerable responsibility on the training and mentoring capacities of the State Department to prepare new entrants to function effectively. The Department, however, is not structured or resourced to ensure a significant level of training and professional education opportunities for public diplomacy assignments. The two to three weeks mandatory courses do not represent a full professional training program. FSI's Public Diplomacy Division readily admits that it has neither the resources nor the mandate to provide more comprehensive training. Civil Service Officers working in PD also have very little opportunity to receive training at FSI. This report recommends:

- Establish a meaningful standard for professional competency in public diplomacy positions;

- Develop an ambitious set of goals for ensuring that all PD officers are fully acquainted with the latest thinking in the fields of marketing, cross-cultural communications, strategic planning and research;
- Design a more robust practicum for entry-level officers;
- Develop a module on public diplomacy for non-PD courses and seminars;
- Set aside funding for Civil Service training;
- Encourage more mentoring.

**Public Diplomacy FSO's Advancement:** Despite representing approximately one-fifth of the Foreign Service and 17 percent of the Senior Foreign Service, there are no PD-coned officers who hold the rank of Career Minister or Career Ambassador. In the last seven years, no PD-coned officer has been promoted to Career Minister or above, while 22 Political-coned officers have been. Only 4 percent of FSOs serving as Ambassadors are PD-coned, an increase from 3 percent in 2008. A positive sign for the future, however, is that 13 percent of recently selected Deputy Chiefs of Mission were PD-coned. PD is also the only cone that has no officers currently serving at the Assistant Secretary level; those positions in the ECA, PA and IIP bureaus currently are held by political appointees. The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has never been filled by a career FSO. While many entry- and mid-level PD officers promotions have been rapid, HR is predicting that officers of all cones will be confronted by a period in which assignments and promotions will be much more competitive and promotions slower. This report recommends:

- Use the advancement slow down to increase training and build the professional knowledge foundation for PD.

# INTRODUCTION

U.S. public diplomacy (PD) is the set of practices and actions by which the United States seeks to inform and influence citizens of foreign countries in ways that promote our national interest. To meet the various challenges of public diplomacy today, the professionals within the State Department are our most important assets. If properly trained, resourced and empowered, they are best positioned to coordinate and give strategic coherence to U.S. government interagency efforts in the field, to shape Washington's understanding of the foreign public environment, and to innovate effectively in a fast-changing communications era.

Effective public diplomacy is especially critical today. Whether in the Sahel and the Middle East, Russia and its periphery, South Asia, or China, precepts of tolerance, political pluralism, rule of law, and economic liberalism are not just being rejected, multiple state and non-state actors are proposing new and very different worldviews, often accompanied by hostile portraits of America aimed at winning converts to their agenda.<sup>1</sup> The proliferation of competing ideologies worldwide, the need to convince allied nations to share the burden of global governance, and the growing complexity of audience outreach in the digital age all suggest the importance of having thoughtful, comprehensive and long-term strategies for engaging foreign publics. Conversely, to limit our concept of public diplomacy to episodic, unconnected activities is to waste a valuable tool of national interest. It requires sustained, consistent and thoughtful engagement to build valuable relationships and networks.

This report focuses on the human resources dimensions of U.S. public diplomacy. Its purpose is to examine how the U.S. Department of State can improve the effectiveness of public diplomacy by rethinking how we are recruiting and selecting public diplomats, improving their training and advancement, and strengthening their influence on policymaking. It builds from the 2008 ACPD report "Getting the People Part Right," updating much of the data on recruitment, selection, training and advancement of PD Foreign Service Officers and PD professionals. Yet the report also emphasizes that the success or failure of our public diplomacy activities also rests heavily on how we nurture and support them and create a leadership environment conducive to thoughtful and strategically based public diplomacy. This is especially important as we aim to recruit and retain new generations of public diplomacy professionals who come of age in an increasingly interconnected and wired world, and are eager to apply their knowledge and experience to connect with global youth on behalf of the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> The Obama Administration's 2015 National Security Strategy recognizes the changed environment, noting that "...power is shifting below and beyond the nation-state." It agrees that there is a need to engage publics in like-minded nations, as they are key to collective action. The 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) similarly emphasizes this.



Secretary Kerry Watches Young U.S.-Chinese Performers At Great Hall of The People in Beijing

## METHODOLOGY

This report aims to consider public diplomacy in all of its complexity in the field and investigates the challenges that public diplomacy professionals face in developing and coordinating innovative strategies. To understand public diplomacy's impact on policy, we must look into the structures and personnel responsible for making it. The report sets out to ask: How is the U.S. Department of State recruiting, training, and promoting public diplomats? How are PD professionals involved in the setting of PD priorities? Are PD professionals trained and empowered to exercise government-wide leadership in the PD environment?

The report is based on approximately 50 interviews with public diplomacy and other State Department professionals, in addition to four focus groups with roughly 30 entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level Foreign Service Officers and Civil Service Officers who work in Washington and in the field. A fifth focus group gathered a dozen representatives of international educational and cultural institutions that often serve as partners for U.S. public diplomacy efforts. It is also based on the content analysis of more than one dozen reports on public diplomacy issues since 2008.<sup>2</sup>

It also draws on the author's observations over a 36-year career in the Foreign Service. The data cited in the report was collected from various human resource offices within the State Department, in addition to the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs' Office of Policy, Planning and Resources (R/PPR).

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[ADAR Full Report 4.1.15.pdf](#); Center, Seth. 2013. *The Evolution of American Public Diplomacy: Four Historical Insights*. The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. <http://www.state.gov/pdcommission/meetings/218815.htm>; Cull, Nicholas. 2009. *The Cold War and the U.S. Information Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Gregory, Bruce. 2014. *"The Paradox of U.S. Public Diplomacy: Its Rise and 'Demise'"*, a Report for the Institute of Public Diplomacy and Global Communication, George Washington University; Kraley, Nicholas. 2012. *America's Other Army: The U.S. Foreign Service and 21st Century Diplomacy*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy Report. 2008. "Getting the People Part Right: A Report on the Human Resource Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy." <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/106297.pdf>. Bishop, Donald M, "Public Diplomacy: Time to Debate Change, Continuity, and Doctrine," *American Diplomacy*. February, 2015. Office of the Historian, the Department of State, "The Public Diplomacy Moment: The Department of State and the Transformation of U.S. Public Diplomacy, 1999–Present." Government Accountability Office, "Foreign Service Midlevel Staffing Gaps Persist Despite Significant Increases in Hiring." June 2012.

<sup>2</sup> See: American Academy of Diplomacy. April 2015. "American Diplomacy at Risk." <http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/>

# BACKGROUND: THE U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY PROFESSIONAL'S RECENT HISTORY

U.S. Public diplomacy's complexity means that it is subject to widely varying interpretations of its purpose and objectives. Although American public diplomacy activities can be traced as far back as the War of Independence, the roots of the current structure date to 1953 when the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) was formed to more effectively advocate for U.S. foreign policy abroad.<sup>3</sup> Its creation was based on the realization that ideas and worldviews would be a key terrain of Cold War competition. In the 1970s, the agency assumed responsibility for all U.S. cultural and educational diplomacy, which focused on promoting mutual understanding between the U.S. and foreign audiences. This combination of information, advocacy, exchanges and

<sup>3</sup> See: Cull, Nicholas. 2009. *The Cold War and the U.S. Information Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; "U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act." 1948. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/177574.pdf>; "Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Program Act." U.S. Code Title 22: Chapter 33. 1961. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/fulbrighthaysact.pdf>

cultural responsibilities allowed U.S. Information Service (USIS) officers abroad to apply an integrated approach to foreign public engagement. In the post-Cold War environment of the 1990s, they also began to more actively promote the attributes of democracy and good governance, which included training for foreign journalists.

In 1999, the State Department and the USIA were merged, largely due to political pressure to cut spending in the foreign affairs budget. Particularly at a time of overall budget austerity, the end of the Cold War was perceived to render unnecessary the existence of an independent agency devoted to outreach to foreign publics. Some advocates of the merger also advanced the thesis that the merger would make public diplomacy more relevant by better connecting it to policy decision-making.

The actual merger process was administrative

## Foreign Service Officer Types

Cone	Position Description
Consular Officer	Facilitate adoptions, help evacuate Americans, and combat fraud to protect our borders and fight human trafficking.
Economic Officer	Work with foreign governments and other USG agencies on technology, science, economic, trade, energy and environmental issues both domestically and overseas.
Management Officer	Resourceful, creative, action-oriented, "go to" leaders responsible for all embassy operations from real estate to people to budget.
Political Officer	Analyze host country political events and able to negotiate and communicate effectively with all levels of foreign government officials.
Public Diplomacy Officer	Engage, inform, and influence opinion leaders, local non-governmental groups, the next generation of leaders, academics, think tanks, government officials and the full range of civil society in order to promote mutual understanding and support for U.S. policy goals.
PD Specialist - Regional English Language Officer	Lead English language programs in the field and work with local educators and exchange alumni.
PD Specialist – Information Resource Officer	Help develop effective information outreach programs and services within the parameters established by Department, Bureau and Post strategic plans.

## Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

The term public diplomacy is often used interchangeably with public affairs, especially since Department policy makers are generally focused on a time-focused policy agenda in regards to one or more governments.

**Public Affairs:** Focuses on the news media and delivering information on the policy issues of the day. The Public Affairs Bureau (PA) engages domestic and international media to communicate timely and accurate information with the goal of furthering U.S. foreign policy and national security interests, as well as broadening understanding of American values. Public affairs is focused on transmitting official viewpoints on specific policies.

**Public Diplomacy:** Although public diplomacy can involve policy advocacy, it proceeds from the assumption that effective communication must be two-way; pre-supposes a willingness to listen and engage with the target audience; and privileges building relationships that transcend any one issue. Public diplomacy assumes not only that we do not have single-issue relationships with foreign publics, but that those publics are interested in more than policies. They might disagree on a policy, but will still be willing to talk to us as long as they view us as a trustworthy and moral partner. Thus, public diplomacy activities frequently include exchanges and cultural activities as well as policy advocacy. The “last three feet” of public diplomacy is typically at PD posts overseas, but the public diplomacy bureaus—ECA, IIP—provide critical programmatic support. In recent years, the growth of digital products have allow IIP and CSCC to engage international publics directly via a variety of digital platforms that occupy a space somewhere between public affairs and traditional public diplomacy. Compared to public affairs, public diplomacy is easier to evaluate than it is to measure because its effectiveness is often very long-term.

rather than conceptual. The State Department absorbed USIA with as little change as possible to existing State structures. USIA’s regional offices were devolved to State’s regional bureaus. Its two programmatic bureaus, educational and cultural affairs programs, and policy programs were hived off into stand-alone functional bureaus: the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP). USIA’s Director’s Office was turned into an Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (also known in State Department parlance as “R”). The Under Secretary was put in an anomalous position: While he or she controlled the funding for overseas public diplomacy operations, the Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) worldwide who carried out the operations did not report to him or her. They reported to their respective Chiefs of Missions (COMs), who in turn answered to their regional bureau Assistant Secretary and eventually the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. The agency’s functional support core also did not survive the merger intact. Instead, its various management and support personnel—who oversaw staffing, resources, training, security and programs—were absorbed into their much larger State Department

counterparts’ offices, and therefore separate from the public diplomacy function. Thus, the various components of public diplomacy were scattered throughout the Department, reporting to different bosses with different perspectives and priorities.

Merging public affairs operations, however, was fairly easy. The State Department and USIA had long shared public affairs responsibilities. The State Department had always directed daily public affairs messaging through its Bureau of Public Affairs (PA), which emerged unchanged from the merger other than a nominal reporting line to the Under Secretary’s office. Under the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, popularly known as the Smith-Mundt Act, USIA was forbidden from addressing domestic audiences, yet it relayed State Department policy messages to foreign audiences and ran embassy press offices.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps because of this, public diplomacy was widely perceived within the State Department as essentially being public affairs.

The merger also affected how public diplomacy

<sup>4</sup> “U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act.” 1948. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/177574.pdf>.



Secretary of State John Kerry delivers a speech on trade policy at Boeing's 737 Airplane Factory in Renton, Washington, on May 19, 2015

professionals developed and charted their careers. In 2008, the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy investigated this issue and submitted the report, “Getting the People Part Right: A Report on the Human Resources Dimension of Public Diplomacy.” It focused on how the public diplomacy and public affairs cone in the Foreign Service had fared in the first decade after the merger and identified seven major problems regarding public diplomacy personnel:

1. There was no effort to recruit individuals into the public diplomacy career track with skills relevant to communicating and influencing foreign audiences;
2. The Foreign Service Officer Test and Oral Assessment did not test for public diplomacy instincts and communication skills;
3. Training for public diplomacy at the Foreign Service Institute had improved, but it did not include graduate-level quality courses comparable to other State Department disciplines;
4. The State Department’s Employee Evaluation Report (EER) lacked a section specific to public diplomacy outreach, measuring their performance of management and administrative tasks instead;
5. It was difficult to assess if public diplomacy impacted policymaking, even though that was the stated purpose of the merger between USIA and the State Department;
6. Staffing of Public Affairs Sections had not changed since 1999 and Public Affairs Officers were seen as managers, not communicators, and peripheral to foreign policy; and
7. Public diplomacy officers were significantly underrepresented in the most senior ranks of the Department.

The report concluded that the integration between public diplomacy and policy making that the 1999 consolidation was supposed to bring

about remained elusive. Public diplomacy officers continued to be significantly underrepresented in the senior-most ranks of Department management. Such persistent marginalization was not just a matter of equity and morale, but also emblematic of a lack of progress on the overarching issue of the integration of public diplomacy into the core work of the Department.

Since 2008, the State Department itself has been transformed. In particular, the explosive growth in hiring of the last decade has made the Department much larger, but also much less experienced in the practice of diplomacy. Half of the Foreign Service has less than 10 years of experience working within the State Department; one-third of it has less than five years of experience. As will be explained throughout this paper, the public diplomacy cone, especially, is facing a massive experience deficit due to the staffing cuts and hiring freezes from the 1990s. This deficit exists while new and exceedingly complex challenges with non-state actors proliferate. Although the new tools of social media are undeniably powerful, the fundamental revolution they create empowers poorly funded but nimble entrants to reach a mass audience in a way that only powerful governments could before. Where once an American Center was a unique purveyor of credible and in-depth information, individuals can access hundreds of sources of at the click of a mouse.

Sixteen years after the merger, it was surprising to hear how many times the event was referenced by the dozens of public diplomacy officers and stakeholders interviewed for this study. Clearly, many legacies from it remain. While this report does not argue for yet another restructuring of the public diplomacy function, there is still work to be done to advance the role of public diplomacy in U.S. statecraft, and to ensure that our professionals have timely and effective tools and skillsets to affect a global system shaped by citizens as much as governments.

# THE STRUGGLE TO DEFINE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY'S MISSION & PRIORITIES

The Department of State defines public diplomacy's mission as: "to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and Government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world."<sup>5</sup> How this broad language translates into specific priorities in hundreds of local posts varies enormously. In practice, decisions on actual public diplomacy activities and programs generally occur in individual bureaus or embassies. In the absence of common lines of authority, those decisions can be isolated and disconnected from longer-term strategic thinking.

The vast majority of public diplomacy professionals interviewed for this report expressed the view that there is no collective understanding within the State Department on the mission and conduct of long-term public diplomacy and how it contributes to statecraft. There is, however, much more clarity on the public affairs function, since senior leadership is inevitably focused on short-term messaging and crises.

Interviews with 50 public diplomacy professionals led to the following findings:

- **Short-term press activities seems to be more valued than long-term public diplomacy ones.** There was widespread agreement among those interviewed that public affairs is valued at the State Department. This is not surprising: engaging the news media is a traditional function of the

Department and public affairs is a natural component of policy implementation. Perhaps as a result, the majority of State Department employees tend to think of PD primarily as short-term messaging and episodic activities rather than a series of programs linked by an objectives-based strategy.

- **In Washington, public diplomacy is closer to the policy process than ever before.** The new generation of public diplomacy officers who have only served in the State Department have a greater understanding of how the foreign policy decision-making process works. Within the Department, the functional bureaus—e.g., Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL); Counterterrorism (CT); and Economics and Business Affairs (EBA)—have press and public diplomacy officers, as do regional bureaus—e.g., Near East Regional Affairs (NEA) and Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA). The closer interaction of PD and non-PD officers mutually broadens their perspectives. For the PD officers, these experiences sharpen their ability to tie information and engagement activities into foreign policy strategy. Senior-level PD officers interviewed also welcomes the opportunities to advance into Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and Ambassador roles, which were rare 15 years ago.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs." 2015. U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/>; Outreach tools include "communications with international audiences, cultural programming, academic grants, educational exchanges, international visitor programs, and U.S. Government efforts to confront ideological support for terrorism."

<sup>6</sup> The USIA's Area Offices were the lifeblood of the agency and catered public diplomacy programs to specific regions. Their Directors were equivalent to Assistant Secretaries. When absorbed by the State Department, the Area Directors became Directors of Public Diplomacy in the regional bureaus, reporting to an Assistant Secretary. Under Secretary Judith McHale created the Public Diplomacy Deputy Assistant Secretary (PD DAS) position to restore some of public diplomacy's significance in the regional bureaus.

- **Yet PD suffers from blurred lines of authority and a multiplicity of objectives.** The distribution of PD officers throughout the State Department also means that they report to different bosses with different agendas. The Washington-based PD officers working in regional or functional bureaus answer to various leaders outside of the PD cone; the Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) in embassies answer to their Ambassadors and regional bureau leadership. Funding for actual PD activities, however, comes from the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and the bureaus and offices under his or her authority: ECA, IIP, PA, and the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC). In many cases, funding can also come from other functional bureaus, such as the CT Bureau, or even the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID). The result is conflicting lines of authority and a multiplicity of priorities that makes it difficult for officers in the field to implement coherent PD strategies that satisfy both Washington and their local environments.
- **Holistic resource support for PD officers is vital.** Resource support for public diplomacy—including training, career development, assignments, fiscal management, public outreach space, and legal issues—is also scattered throughout the State Department. The various offices within the State Department that handle these issues lack perspective on how decisions in one area impact larger public diplomacy capabilities.<sup>7</sup> The loss of integration between PD priorities and the resources needed at the State Department to implement them was cited by the PD professionals interviewed for this study as a significant source of frustration.
- **And the majority of the State Department still does not understand PD.** Non-PD officers can spend their entire careers

without ever being asked to think about PD as more than a messaging tool. Only if they assume a leadership position within the Department and/or at a U.S. Embassy will they be responsible for a strategic PD perspective and, even then, they are giving little preparation for doing so. The result, wrote one PAO is, “We end up spending our time training the front office on what we do and how it can, in fact, be effective in promoting our broader USG goals. I have found non-PD and first-time Ambassadors leaving their jobs finally understanding PD and wishing they’d understood its impact earlier.” In addition, even PD officers spend little time learning about PD as an intellectual concept and honing their ability to think strategically. The result, according to PD interview subjects, is that too often PD in the field can be too focused on just administering programs.

A central conclusion from the interviews and focus group discussions is that the present structure of PD is much better at managing short-term and post- or bureau-specific activities than at thinking long-term and across bureau lines. This also applies to the question of how public diplomacy tradecraft should evolve to meet new global challenges.

In recent years, several Under Secretaries of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs have attempted to define strategic long-term priorities. Under Secretary Judith McHale’s 2010 document, “Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World—A Strategic Approach for the 21st Century,” was the most ambitious.<sup>8</sup> She identified the five major imperatives for PD as: “shaping the narrative, expanding and strengthening people to people ties,

<sup>8</sup> In March 2010, in close coordination with the QDDR process, McHale released the Department’s new PD strategy, *Public Diplomacy: Strengthening US Engagement with the World: A Strategic Approach for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The strategy listed five imperatives for public diplomacy: shaping the narrative—particularly in places where the United States was misrepresented or not represented at all; expanding people-to-people relationships to build mutual trust; combating violent extremism; better informing policymaking about foreign attitudes upfront in the decision process; and deploying resources in line with priorities. (From the Office of the Historian’s report, *The Public Diplomacy Moment*). The document can be accessed here: [http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/pdfs/PD\\_US\\_World\\_Engagement.pdf](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/pdfs/PD_US_World_Engagement.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> As just one example, and as outlined in the ACPD’s recent report, “Public Diplomacy at Risk,” one part of the Department was working to effectively close down American Spaces even as the policy priority was to increase outreach to publics.

combatting violent extremism, better informing decision making, and deploying resources in line with competing priorities.” Much of the language from this document was applied to the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and was incorporated into the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) of 2010. However, there has not been an update to this strategic framework since 2010.

The lack of clarity on PD’s mission and role in current foreign policy challenges also has an impact on the cone’s overall morale. The qualitative research for this report indicated that a lingering sense of “cone inferiority” within the Department exists among PD officers. At times, the officers interviewed spoke of themselves as being “second class citizens” within the Department. Significantly, this included the entry-level public diplomacy officers, who recounted instances of their work being dismissed at post and shared a broad perception that PD was held in low esteem by their non-PD colleagues.

On the other hand, the interviews also revealed a high degree of cutting edge thinking about public diplomacy within the State Department. A number of PD officers have developed sophisticated conceptual frameworks for public diplomacy and have thoughtful approaches to adapting public diplomacy’s existing structures to modern challenges. The challenge and opportunity is to create forums and structures for such thinking to be more widely shared, debated, and amplified. Currently, this does not happen in a systematic way and wonderful PD talent is not being fully used. A number of outside organizations have wrestled with similar challenges and developed solutions to guide their institutions. For example, the military has learned how to harvest and internalize great ideas through the development of various doctrines that support its officers. Similarly, non-governmental organizations and arts and cultural institutions have created inclusive and robust processes that help define their roles and the opportunities their employees have to advance their missions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Create a structured but dynamic process for developing and implementing public diplomacy strategies that is rigorous, comprehensive and inclusive.** Effectively implementing ambitious and long-term PD strategies requires not just defining goals but building a consensus on how PD’s cultural, educational and advocacy tools can focus on an issue in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way. This is especially difficult when lines between bureaucratic authorities are blurred. Moreover, affecting public attitudes is often a long-term process and its progress can be glacial. As a result, the temptation is to focus on tools and their short-term outputs, such as the numbers of tweets, events, or exchanges, rather than maintaining a disciplined focus on desired outcomes.

Creating a well-honed strategy development process, focused on building concrete roadmaps on priority issues, could help counteract short-termism in PD. It also has potential to create consensus on PD best practices, encourage greater strategic innovation and cohesion among professionals, and build a collective understanding of PD grand strategy within the Department and with outside partners. This process could also help develop a modern set of principles for PD for the State Department’s Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM).<sup>9</sup>

Here, the Department could learn from other U.S. government agencies, private sector institutions, and non-governmental organizations that are also grappling with the challenges of developing long-term strategic planning for engaging foreign audiences. This includes the Smithsonian Institution and NGOs working in policy advocacy and governance development abroad. In addition, the Department of Defense regularly uses doctrines to build institutional consensus on concepts and their implementation. It relies on a corps of dedicated planners who guide the development of living documents that help officers

<sup>9</sup> Note: Some will argue that there is no need for specific PD strategies on priority issues. That would be a mistake. The Army and the Navy work jointly to defend national security, but that does not mean they do not think very distinctly about their particular roles and responsibilities. PD can be integrated without being subsumed by the State Department’s other components.



U.S. Embassy Buenos Aires, Dancing To Connect Program, June 1, 2015

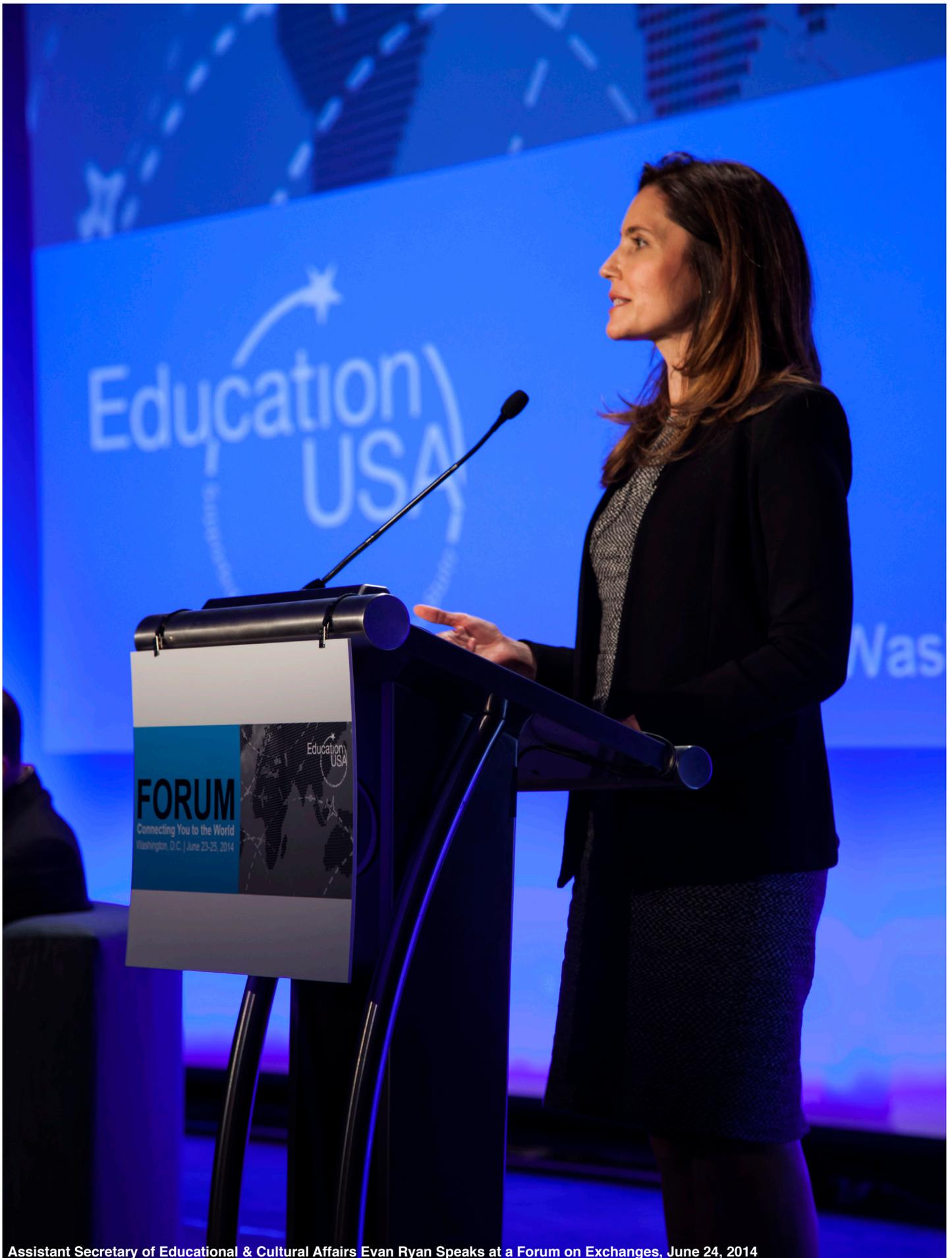
## Public Diplomacy FSOs in the Field

The qualitative data for this report indicates that PD officers feel the most fulfilled while working in the field, due to their direct engagement with foreign citizens and the diversity of the work. At the embassy-level, the public diplomacy function has changed little since the merger.

The country team is still where policy and public diplomacy intersect, much as it always has been, and officers generally praised their working relationships with other embassy offices and agencies.

However, many interview subjects expressed frustration that they were on a treadmill of hyperactivity, which diverted time and resources from seriously addressing the most important and urgent needs. Wrote one PAO, “Given the many internal meetings I am required to attend, not to mention the difficulty of getting transport or allowing people into the Embassy (note: this was not a high-threat post), I rarely see contacts anymore. We have turned into a mini-USAID and bureaucratic issues impede our ability to do ‘real’ PD outreach.” Among their specific concerns:

- Endless Washington initiatives: Many officers noted that PD initiatives continue to be generated by Washington without regard to post resource constraints or the many previous activities directed from Washington that they are maintaining. One senior-level officer based in Washington noted that PD officers in the field desperately need a set of parameters that can protect them from new demands which sometimes do work well in their local context.
- A heavy management and reporting burden: Due to the PD-specific work of managing budgets and grants, much of PD FSOs time is absorbed by administrative work. The State Department’s management officers at post cannot take on the budgets and grants work of PAOs. Reporting back to Washington often requires data entry, which can be laborious and sometimes duplicative because of overlapping databases. Due to this and other constraints, many Public Affairs Officers lament that “bureaucratic issues impede our ability to do outreach.” R/PPR is currently working on a remedy for this issue.
- Chasing funding: Several interview subjects lamented the growing practice in Washington of asking PAOs to compete for funding based on the priority themes of a particular bureau or agency. Funding for countering violent extremism activities via the Bureau of Counterterrorism or funding from the Under Secretary’s innovation funds were cited as examples of an approach that views posts as something akin to NGO grantees rather than partners. Moreover, none of the funding pays for overhead costs, and no additional staff are provided to carry out the work. This explains posts’ increase in activity without adequate administrative support, especially when the use of contract and grant funds are under extreme vigilance by Washington.



Assistant Secretary of Educational & Cultural Affairs Evan Ryan Speaks at a Forum on Exchanges, June 24, 2014

evaluate environments, define problems and conceptualize comprehensive responses.

In the case of public diplomacy, a long-term planning approach could be catered to specific challenges such as countering violent extremism (CVE) or combatting disinformation. Key elements of such a capability would be to:

- Identify dedicated planners and subject matter experts to oversee and facilitate discussions, and then turn good ideas into rigorously defined implementation plans;
- Allow for deep and inclusive debate that would engage entry-, mid-, and senior-level officers in the field, in addition to external experts and implementing partners, on the best approaches to public diplomacy on specific issues;
- Determine the resources necessary to implement the strategies and identify where they exist across the State Department;
- Focus on creating living documents that are adaptable to change, keeping in mind that most PD challenges will unfold and evolve over long periods;
- Ensure that the documents are broadly socialized in and outside the Department so that other diplomacy professionals and the broader PD stakeholder community can thoroughly understand and support the strategies.

At the present time, such a process would be best overseen and facilitated by focused strategic planners in R/PPR.

**Strengthen R/PPR as the office with a holistic oversight of the entire range of supporting resources for public diplomacy:** Ten years ago, the Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources (R/PPR) was established to respond to the institutional weakness of the public diplomacy function. Originally, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy was supposed to be only a small, policy operation like the other Under Secretaries. Yet it has a multi-million dollar budget to manage, amounting to more than \$600 million in FY14. Over time, R/PPR has steadily strengthened its ability to represent and lead the function on resource and planning issues. In recent years, it has taken the initiative to build a PD planning and implementation process. No other Department office is charged with understanding how different resource and management functions can affect the effectiveness of PD. In the absence of a PD functional bureau, only R/PPR is positioned to play that role and their work is essential.

# MODERN U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY STAFFING

At the State Department, the public diplomacy division's staffing structure is complex and composed of six employee types:

1. Foreign Service Officers (FSOs);
2. Specialist Corps (Regional Language Officers, Information Resource Officers);
3. Locally Employed Staff (LES);
4. Political Appointees;
5. Civil Service;<sup>10</sup> and
6. Contractors.

Local employees play a critical role at embassies in public diplomacy programming. Their ability to interpret local attitudes, code words, perceptions, and their ability to open doors to key sectors of local audiences is essential. In Washington, political appointees and Civil Service employees mainly work in the Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), International Information Programs (IIP), and Public Affairs (PA) bureaus. Political appointees also hold a number of senior positions in these functional bureaus, in addition to some regional bureaus. To provide tools (educational exchange, cultural performances, and speakers) ECA and IIP have added a substantial number of contractors who largely provide expertise in the rapidly evolving technology and social media areas.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This also includes Schedule B, or expert, appointments that have term limits.

<sup>11</sup> Note: Many PD Foreign Service Officers do not consider service in the ECA and IIP bureaus career-enhancing, unless they are in senior positions. Corridor wisdom is that it is better for entry- and mid-level officers to take tours as press officers (in the Public Affairs Bureau or in as Press and Public Diplomacy Officers in the regional or functional bureaus) or in a Department policy staffing position, as these positions are closer to policymaking and may better position an officer for future assignments. In any case, there are relatively few Foreign Service positions in ECA or IIP. Those bureaus are therefore staffed by mainly Civil Service and contractors.

This section will focus mainly on public diplomacy Foreign Service Officers.

To explain the current state of PD staffing via the Foreign Service, some history is needed. During the 1990s, USIA's Foreign Service staffing was cut in half due to budget cuts amid the perception in political circles that overseas audience engagement was no longer a priority after the Cold War. In 1996, the agency ceased hiring entirely and consequently eliminated the bulk of its entry-level officer positions. As a result, by 1999, USIA's Foreign Service Officer corps had reached a low of approximately 550 people. This created a lop-sided hierarchical structure with virtually no junior officers and a shortage of mid-level officers.

Two massive State Department Foreign Service hiring programs, the Diplomacy Readiness Initiative of 2005 and Diplomacy 3.0 process of 2009, led to a sharp increase in junior officers. Consequently, the PD cone nearly tripled its Foreign Service Officer numbers to its present level of approximately 1,500. Currently, PD officers represent 19.5 percent of the Foreign Service. Public diplomacy and public affairs is currently the fourth largest cone in the State Department, slightly behind the consular and economic cones and slightly ahead of the management cone. However, there are two caveats to that otherwise impressive number.

First, as many as one-third of PD-coned officers at any given moment are not in public diplomacy assignments. Foreign Service staffing is based on a model that assumes officers will spend much time either working outside their specialty or in training. All Foreign Service Officers complete one or more consular tours at the beginning of their career. At the midpoint of their career, they normally complete an assignment in another

## Public Diplomacy Staffing Types at U.S. Department of State

Position Type	Where They Work	Nationality	PD Staff Size	Type of Job
Public Diplomacy Coned Foreign Service Officer Generalists	Domestic and abroad	U.S. citizens	~1500	Traditional diplomatic staff for embassies abroad. Officers are experts in building cross-cultural relations and communications.
Civil Service/FAO	Domestic with limited assignments abroad	U.S. citizens	~200	Civil Service employees support foreign policy from the United States. Generally they develop and support exchange programs, run the Department's Public Affairs, and develop information campaigns to be deployed in conjunction with our staff abroad.
Locally Employed Staff	Abroad only	Foreign nationals	> 6000	LE Staff generally run the day-to-day public diplomacy operations at the direction of the American staff. They provide much needed continuity against the regular rotations of American staff in and out of posts. LE staff are generally citizens of the country they work in and, in addition to their program expertise, also provide local insights, contacts, language skills, and cultural understanding.
Regional English Language Officers (Foreign Service Specialist)	Domestic and abroad	U.S. citizens	34	ELOs are responsible for all Department of State-sponsored English teaching activities in that country, or as a Regional ELO with responsibilities for English language program activities in several countries, necessitating extensive travel.
Information Resource Officers (Foreign Service Specialist)	Domestic and abroad	U.S. citizens	33	IROs counsel Mission officials on effective information program resources and services, assess staff needs, carry out regional training programs, demonstrate and promote U.S. electronic information resources, and establish contacts with host country information and library institutions.

cone. At a senior level, they may serve in leadership positions which are generally not assigned to any particular cone. As a result, today's PD officer can easily spend as little as one half of his or her career in PD assignments.

Second, the vast majority of the PD corps are presently at entry- and mid-level grades. This is due to the tripling of PD officers in the last 15 years. While entry- and mid-level officers bring to the State Department valuable knowledge and experience, they have had little time to accumulate experience working in official diplomatic roles. The years spent in consular work by non-PD officers contributes importantly to this situation. Moreover, mentoring opportunities have also declined as the ratio of PD officers with 20 or more years of experience has considerably diminished. The senior-level officers interviewed emphasized that entry-level officers bring with them outstanding talent. That incoming talent and knowledge must be supported with ongoing training and education, in addition to time in the field and Washington. This time in service is critical so that they intimately know both the unique challenges of conducting PD abroad and those of policy making in Washington.

Senior-level interview subjects were widely concerned that the State Department's current HR system does not produce officers with adequate knowledge and experience levels:

- “As a DCM, I constantly had to watch over my [mid-level] PAO because he did not have the tradecraft and experience to avoid really basic mistakes. Because there is no rulebook on PD, some things you just have to learn on the job, and he didn't have the background.”

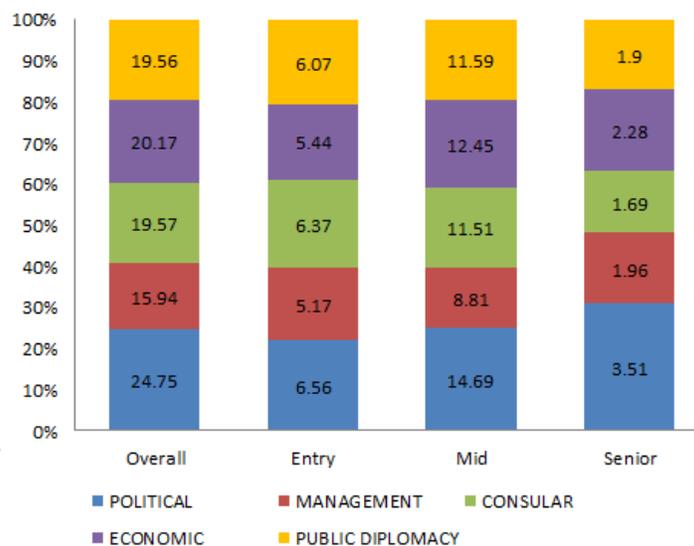
- “I was Ambassador at a post with a sensitive public affairs environment and I didn't want to be on the frontline with the press. But because my PD people had neither the experience nor the language fluency, I had no choice.”

- “Not only are [entry-level] officers too inexperienced for the grade level of PD job they finally get, but they don't have a PD mindset. In the consular cone, people come to you and you decide if you will help them or not. PD is completely the opposite. It is a very difficult mental adjustment, and yet they are already at grade levels where they are supposed to have real knowledge and experience.”

The State Department has faced extraordinary challenges in managing the rapid changes in its human resources structure over the last two decades.<sup>12</sup> In the Director General's

office, where decisions on hiring and staffing rest, the particular requirements of the PD function have been peripheral to its management of the larger Foreign Service. The result, however, is that no single office has oversight over how hiring, training and management of PD's multiple HR structures integrate effectively. Training decisions fall to the Foreign Service Institute. Decisions on Civil Service/Foreign Affairs Officers are left to leadership in the ECA, IIP and PA bureaus. Issues regarding Local Employees (LE) fall between the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, which funds them, the regional bureaus to whom they report, and HR, which attempts to ensure that PD job classifications match as closely as possible Department-wide policy.

Percentage of Officers by Cone



<sup>12</sup> The American Academy of Diplomacy's 2015 report, *Diplomacy at Risk*, discusses these challenges in great detail.

To ensure PD's effectiveness over time, a unit within R/PPR should be charged with thinking about how recruiting, hiring, training, and staffing structures for PD's multiple HR systems work together. At the moment, there is no personnel master plan that ascertains how PD's current level of Foreign Service jobs and staffing relate to core needs. There is no way to determine if the present level of 1,500 officers is enough and how the Department will compensate for the relative level of inexperience in the cone.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Strengthen and institutionalize R/PPR's oversight role over PD HR questions:** Efficient management of PD's human resources will only be possible if one office considers all the issues holistically. In the consular cone, that function is performed by the Consular Affairs Bureau. The closest equivalent to that in PD is R/PPR. Over the last few years, R/PPR has moved in this direction and should expand its efforts.
- **Develop a comprehensive approach to developing in-cone expertise at mid- and senior levels:** A lack of cone experience has been accumulating for a significant period. Today's mid-level officers have limited means to catch up. At the same time, they bring with them valuable skills and new communication techniques that are wasted when they do not serve in their cone. First, a better understanding of

the scope of the problem is needed. Without a study that defines the scope of the problem, it will be too easy to misunderstand the real impact of this trend and the extent to which it needs to be mitigated.

- **Define the PD function's personnel requirements:** Human resources hires into cones based on the number of positions available in those cones and leadership within the various bureaus determine the kinds of positions that should be created.<sup>13</sup> Thus the fact that PD now numbers 1,500 officers appears to be more incidental to the process than the result of a strategic plan for PD. We recommend a larger framework for considering PD staffing requirements globally.
- **Define a career path for Civil Service Officers:** At present, Civil Servants in PD roles, and arguably other roles in the State Department, have little visibility on how they can progress in their careers. One near-term step R/PPR can take to mitigate this is to publish a list of all Civil Service PD positions. If Civil Servants have more information, they may be able to work out their own paths without having to wait for vacancy notices or for R/PPR to define it for them.

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<sup>13</sup> According an interviewee familiar with the hiring process, as funding for expanded hiring became available under Diplomacy 3.0, the decision was made to allocate 60% of the new positions to overseas posts, 20% to domestic bureaus, and 20% to expand training positions. HR would then allocate new positions to cones based on a review of mission needs assessments made by each bureau.

# RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

Public diplomacy flourishes when professionals possess a diversity of competencies to engage effectively with foreign audiences via information, education and culture. PD professionals must be prepared to not just debate issues, but to connect with skeptical audiences and find an entry point into societies.<sup>14</sup>

The current Foreign Service recruitment process is framed by the generalist ethos of the Department that eschews recruitment based on specialized needs of each of the five cones. The theory is that any officer should be capable in principle of operating effectively across all of the Department's areas of responsibility as well as in the officer's specific career track. Recruitment is also kept to a minimum because the numbers of applicants is perceived to be sufficiently large that additional skills-based recruitment is not necessary. However this does not speak to the quality of the applicant pool. While internships can provide a pipeline for incoming Foreign and Civil Service Officers, the Diplomats in Residence (DIR) program is the only formal recruitment effort for the Department of State. The program places senior and mid-level Foreign Service Officers in universities around the country who are charged with increasing regional and ethnic diversity in the application pool rather than identifying specific skillsets. As a result there is no effort to encourage those with particular public diplomacy skills, or any cone-specific skills, to take the written exam.

The public diplomacy/public affairs cone does not lack for applicants. Since 2007, 23,000 people have taken the exam and indicated their preferred cone as being public diplomacy. This is significantly less than the political and consular cones, but more than the economic or management cones.

Once candidates pass the written exam, their applications are reviewed by a panel of Foreign Service Officers who decide whether or not to recommend them for the oral assessment. Those who pass the oral exam are placed on a hiring register ranked by conal specialty according to the total points they receive on the assessment. The Department hires off the conal registers beginning with those with the highest points. Thus those with the lowest point scores have a much lower rate of actually being hired, with the rate fluctuating according to Department hiring needs. The written and oral exams are based on generic questions without cone-specific content.

In recent years, however, there have been two important and positive changes. First, in 2003 a point preference system was added for demonstrated language competency. According to officials familiar with the exam process, the addition of the language preference points has significantly improved the degree of demonstrated language competence, especially in designated priority languages (Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Arabic, and Russian) that received a larger point preference than other languages. The addition of a language preference is particularly valuable for the selection of PD officers because they should be extensively involved in outreach to public audiences who usually do not speak English.

Second, in 2007, a Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP) added an interim step between the

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<sup>14</sup> Originally, the U.S. Information Agency drew from a much wider circle of competencies than the State Department currently does. In USIA's earlier years, there was a conscious effort to recruit seasoned journalists, renowned academics, and those with deep knowledge of the arts. In 1974, USIA became more policy focused, abandoning specialized recruiting and joining the Department's hiring process. Yet those early hires continued to influence the thinking of their fellow officers.

written and oral exams. Those who successfully pass the written exam are asked to submit a series of essays designed to evaluate them for qualities such as leadership, interpersonal skills, and management. A team of experienced PD officers review files for those who expressed interest in the PD cone. Only those selected go forward to the oral exam.

The QEP process is an improvement on the old system. Several professionals interviewed who are familiar with the process indicated that, increasingly, PD hires bring with them related experience. While applicants to the PD cone are still self-selecting, because members of that cone conduct the QEP file review, they interpret the answers in the context of that cone's requirements. Those who rank highest on the QEP evaluations also tend to succeed on the oral exam. This indicates that the QEP is doing a good job of identifying the most promising candidates. Although there is no available data to confirm the quality of successful applicants to an ideal PD profile, the backgrounds of several entry-level officers interviewed for this study had significant press and communications experience.

Although the additions of the language and QEP parts of the hiring process are important, the lack of specific recruitment for PD skills is nevertheless a weakness in the system. Last year the Department spent approximately \$60,000 on recruitment per successful applicant.<sup>15</sup> The good news is that the process does triage out the most inexperienced applicants: 75 percent of the hires for the public diplomacy cone were over the age of 30, which indirectly indicates some level of professional experience. Yet it is unclear how that experience was or was not relevant.

The Department's focus on generalists as the preferred candidate pool relies on the premise that candidates will receive the specialized knowledge of the Foreign Service via training or on-the-job mentoring. For some Foreign Service skills, that may be the case. However, in public diplomacy, with its diverse skill set requirements in press, culture, education and public policy, limited training and informal mentoring is insuffi-

<sup>15</sup> Based on total cost of the Recruitment, Examination, and Evaluation Office and the number of officers offered employment in 2014.

cient. If the structure is designed to hire predominantly generalists, then there should be a commitment to high-level specialized training after they are hired, as is true at the Department of Defense. As will be discussed later, however, this is not currently the case. Increasingly, the State Department needs candidates that balance general knowledge with some degree of specialization. These candidates are known as "T-shaped candidates."<sup>16</sup> These are rare and should be actively recruited for.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Identify public diplomacy-relevant skills for now and the future:** The Department has already begun in practice to change from a generalist model of Foreign Service Officer recruitment to focus more on T-shaped candidates. As a result, it is critical to forecast and plan personnel needs for public diplomacy, and to identify gaps in skill sets to adequately recruit the best fitting candidates. R/PPR should set up a working group to identify the specific skills that are needed for public diplomacy, especially in critical environments, and then present recommendations to the Board of Examiners (BEX). Presently there is no consensus on the skills needed for incoming public diplomacy officers. As such, the current model of relying on the discretion of individual PD officers can be subject to inconsistency and leaves the process vulnerable to real or perceived bias. A scoring rubric for the QEP stage should be developed and updated annually with the preferred skills and experience necessary to meet current and future challenges.

<sup>16</sup> T-shaped candidates have two kinds of characteristics, hence the use of the letter "T" to describe them. The vertical stroke of the "T" is a depth of skill that allows them to contribute to the creative process. That can be from any number of different fields: an industrial designer, an architect, a social scientist, a business specialist or a mechanical engineer. The horizontal stroke of the "T" is the disposition for collaboration across disciplines. It is composed of two things. First is empathy, which is important because it allows people to imagine the problem from another perspective and to stand in somebody else's shoes. Second, they tend to get very enthusiastic about other people's disciplines, to the point that they may actually start to practice them. T-shaped people have both depth and breadth in their skills. (Hansen, Morten T, Chief Executive, "IDEO CEO Tim Brown: T-Shaped Stars: The Backbone of IDEO's Collaborative Culture." January 21, 2010.)

- **Increase targeted recruitment for PD Professionals:** R/PPR should also develop an outreach plan for PD officers to recruit Foreign Service and Civil Service Officers with PD's extraordinary network of non-governmental partners. There are certainly many Americans who do not traditionally think of themselves as foreign affairs experts but have extensive experience in media, cultural, educational, and interpersonal engagement. Senior PD officers should routinely make PD recruitment part of their work.
- **Review the Foreign Service oral exam to add questions demonstrating PD-like skills:** The oral exam modules focus mainly on good interpersonal skills at an office level. Yet FSOs also need to demonstrate empathy, good humor, and soft persuasion skills, often in a foreign and unfriendly environment. These skills are absolutely essential to public diplomacy. A question in the structured interview that looks for these skills would be important for all of the cones, not just PD.
- **Create a program to establish cultural, educational, or artistic Fellows in Residence:** The current Franklin Fellows program could potentially be adapted to bring in this expertise, which would highlight our

commitment to represent abroad the best of American culture.<sup>17</sup> Today, the State Department could benefit tremendously from having regular interaction with leaders who have deep and powerful relationships with overseas audiences. These fellows could broaden the Department's public diplomacy horizons and provide renewed credibility to our outreach to important communities abroad who are unlikely to respond to a diplomatic generalist.

- **Develop incentives and encouragement for PD officials to serve on the Board of Examiners (BEX) earlier in their careers:** Rising PD officers should have more experience and involvement in the selection of new officers, especially since they will be more familiar with the new social media skills that we look for in new PD hires. The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs should explore ways to incentivize participation in BEX for mid-level PD officers who joined after the merger since currently it is widely seen as a terminal position. Presently only one mid-level PD officer participates in the examination process.

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<sup>17</sup> Note: The U.S. Information Agency began to lose touch with the cultural and artistic communities in the 1990s.



Brazilian Pitcher André Rienzo Participates in a Sports Diplomacy Program hosted by MLB and U.S. Consulate Recife

# TRAINING & EDUCATION

The generalist nature of the hiring process places a considerable responsibility on the training and mentoring capacities of the State Department to prepare new entrants to function effectively. While professional development comes with experience and socialization, PD professionals need a much more solid baseline of training they can build from. The State Department, however, is not structured or resourced to ensure a significant level of training and professional education opportunities for public diplomacy assignments.

This issue is not isolated to public diplomacy. There is not a strong culture of professional knowledge development within the State Department. In its April 2015 report, “American Diplomacy at Risk,” the American Academy of Diplomacy (AAD) wrote that “The Foreign Service lacks the professional education and standards to meet its current heavy responsibilities and to create its necessary future senior leaders.”<sup>18</sup> While the Department of Defense offers military officers long-term training and educational opportunities at every level, both inside and outside government, the State Department does not prioritize professional education for FSOs. For example, the Army’s Public Affairs Officer training is 10 weeks compared to two weeks for State, even though an Army PAO’s responsibilities are very narrowly focused compared to a State PAO.

One problem is funding. By far, the largest percentage of funding for training goes to language training. According to the Office of Human Resources, most external long-term training or career-broadening opportunities available to FSOs are those that the Department receives for free. A second and more fundamental prob-

lem, however, is that the Department has never linked professional education and advancement in a manner that officers would perceive it as career-enhancing. Whereas the Department of Defense sends officers to its War Colleges to prepare them for senior leadership, the State may send them to War Colleges without any connection to follow-on assignments.

While the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) technically administers most PD training, R/PPR funds, and largely sets, PD training priorities. By 2005, the Under Secretary was devoting \$1 million annually to a new Public Diplomacy Division at FSI to train new officers in the basic skills of press, cultural and exchanges work.<sup>19</sup> Today, it contributes approximately \$2.9 million.

Several graduates of the mandatory courses who were interviewed stated they would benefit from additional in-depth study, including crisis communication, strategic planning, conducting PD in high-threat environments, and using research more effectively to target audiences and assess the effectiveness of their actions. FSI’s Public Diplomacy Division readily admits that it has neither the resources nor the mandate to provide more comprehensive training. Unfortunately, additional training requires additional funding.

## Mandatory Courses

The Public Diplomacy Division at FSI created a core PD curriculum with an essential structure that has largely been untouched since the 2008 report. It includes a small set of mandatory courses, including:

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<sup>18</sup> In addition, their concern is that the increasing diversity of the Foreign Service cohort, although a desirable trend for many reasons, has resulted in a corps that lacks a collective understanding of diplomatic history and a common language of practice.

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<sup>19</sup> Under USIA, educating new officers in those skills was the goal of a two year training and practicum known as the Junior Officer Trainee (JOT) program. The JOT program disappeared in the 1990s.

- Foundations of Public Diplomacy, a two week seminar for officers new to PD (PY100)
- Public Affairs Officer (PAO) Tradecraft (PY122)
- Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO) Tradecraft (PY140)
- Information Officer (IO) Tradecraft (PY138)
- Desk Officer Tradecraft (PY137)
- Introduction to Grants (PY220)

Officers normally take two to three of these courses in preparation for a first-time assignment. In 2014, approximately 194 officers took the basic PD training (PY100, PY122, PY138, and PY140), about 82 percent of whom were PD coned. The latter courses in the list are designed for first-time CAOs, IOs and PAOs and provide them with the basic tools of their craft. For the CAO, this would involve how to manage exchange programs, administer PD budgets, and handle a visiting performing group. For an IO, it would include traditional and social media training. These courses have evolved from a series of guest speakers who share anecdotes from their careers to deeper curricula that focus on critical thinking and building skills.

The mandatory courses, however, do not represent a full professional training program. Many of the entry- and mid-level FSOs interviewed were generally pleased with the course content, especially the on-camera media training for IOs and technical skills in completing grant applications for CAOs. Yet no one interviewed thought that the present training program was adequately preparing PD officers for their careers. As one mid-level public diplomacy officer stated in an interview, “90 percent of the PD officers in my entering cohort feel they have been thrown into PD positions without adequate training and experience.”

In addition to the short duration of the courses, they are normally poorly timed for the officers. They generally are scheduled after an officer

has completed language training and is distracted by preparations to depart for post. This can make intensive study difficult. In addition, the experience-levels of the course participants can vary widely. Courses are not adapted for the experience-level of officers at the State Department and/or within public diplomacy. Officers can often bring with them widely varying skills, which can make course design and instruction especially difficult. A first-time PAO, for instance, could have anywhere from zero to 20 years of service within the State Department, or she or he could be a first time officer.

## Elective Courses

Elective courses can supplement the mandatory ones, should public diplomacy officers request them while they are on temporary duty in, or assigned to, Washington. There are 11 electives for mid-level and senior-level officers. They include: Strategic Planning; Managing PD Resources at Post; Creating Digital Media for PD Outreach; New Trends in Public Diplomacy; Seminar on Advanced Cultural Diplomacy; Social Media Strategy; and the Marketing College.

There are also five elective workshops: Cultural, Educational and Exchange Programs; American Spaces Strategic Management; IRC Management; Social Media Practice; and Media and Information Programs. Some of these are granted in regional locations, such as Vienna or Bangkok, making them more accessible for PD officers in the field.

The Public Diplomacy Division at FSI has developed several innovative approaches in these elective courses. The Strategic Planning course, for instance, brings together PD officers and Local Employees (LE) from missions abroad to learn from each other’s perspectives. This is the only strategic planning course in the Department that includes LES, which is a tribute to the special emphasis that PD places on the important role of its local staff. There are also a number of courses that are held overseas, targeting particular regions. However, these courses as well as those bringing LE to Washington can eat up a substantial portion of the training offices budget,

due to travel and per diem costs. As a result, there is little funding available for the development of new courses and materials, particularly those at advanced levels.

Approximately 30 percent of public diplomacy officers have received some form of social media training. Most took the Social Media Practitioners Workshop, a course to highlight the unique challenges facing social media account managers at State. The one-week, once a year “Marketing College,” which began in 2008, also receives plaudits from its participants. It is one of the few opportunities for officers to learn how to channel private-sector expertise into public diplomacy. They especially appreciated the focus on persuasive communication. While graduates of the course commented that every PD officer should take it, many will not, as attendance depends upon available slots and each officer’s logistical constraints and personal motivation. However, understanding the concepts and tools of marketing and how to apply them to the public diplomacy space should be a core part of PD officers’ education at the outset of their careers, and the skills should be constantly updated.

Civil Service working in public diplomacy also have very little opportunity to receive training at FSI, as most training is designed for officers going to the field. This is unfortunate as joint training and professional education could be a platform where better cohesion between those in Washington and in the field could be developed. It is also important to note that the Civil Service require funding and approval from their bureaus, something multiple participants reported is extremely difficult to acquire.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish a meaningful standard for professional competency in public diplomacy positions:** Presently, the required training to become a competent IO, CAO or PAO in missions big and small is a three-week course. This is not sufficient. Even first tour consular officers, who are rarely running an office without supervision, receive more training. Consular officers have

well-defined standards they must meet before receiving their consular commission. For public diplomacy, the Under Secretary should similarly establish a meaningful and high standard for professional competency for PD assignments and at various grades. The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy can convene conversations with internal and external stakeholders to support this effort.

- **Develop an ambitious set of goals for ensuring that all PD officers are fully acquainted with the latest thinking in the fields of marketing, cross-cultural communications, strategic planning and research:** Every PD officer should have regular exposure to the latest thinking on persuasive communications. The Marketing College or similar courses should be made mandatory for all PD officers, not the subject of bidding. To cut costs and improve targeting of the courses, they could be co-taught by experienced PD officers. Focus should also be on strategic planning, research and evaluation for all activities.
- **Design a more robust practicum for entry-level officers:** In their April 2015 report, the American Academy of Diplomacy (AAD) recommended that the Department create an initial practicum for entry level officers. We strongly agree. A prolonged and more robust training period in Washington would help new PD officers understand their cone from a Washington perspective, an opportunity they would otherwise not have until after they have completed their overseas tours.
- **Develop a module on public diplomacy for non-PD courses and seminars:** The effectiveness of public diplomacy is compromised by the fact that most non-PD officers understand public diplomacy as press activities. For PD to be more than short-term messaging, the rest of the Department needs to understand why it matters. Chiefs of Mission, who are charged

with overseeing PD, may be dispatched to posts with media training, but not with how to think strategically about PD. This makes the PD officer's job much more difficult. One option would be to create a module on how public diplomacy advances mission goals, which could be incorporated into the courses that officers take before departing to post. These could focus specifically on how host-country audiences perceive America and U.S. policies, the implications for activities in country, and case studies in crafting effective responses. The module could also be inserted in training for consular, economic, political and management officers, in addition to Deputy Chiefs of Missions and Chiefs of Missions.

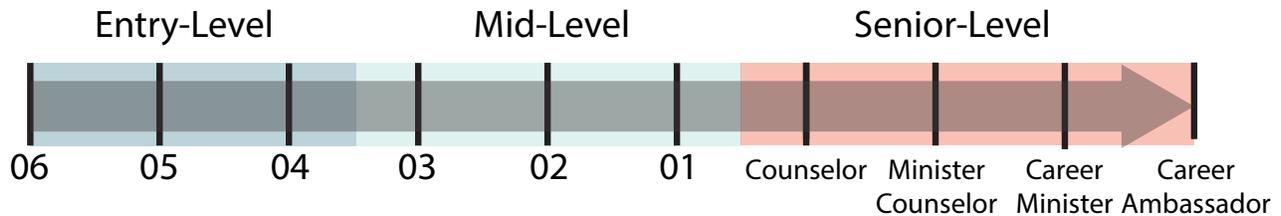
- **Set aside funding for Civil Service training:** Civil Service participants in our panels reported that it is difficult for them to receive approval for training due to a lack of funding. R/PPR should look into the availability of training for PD Civil Service Officers and develop a minimum recommended level of funding per officer for continuing education.
- **Encourage more mentoring:** One of the unintended consequences of the rapid increase in Foreign Service hiring is that the traditional capacity of senior staff to mentor junior colleagues has been strained. This is true across cones. In particular, R/PPR should explore the feasibility of the Consular Regional Officer model to provide PD professionals with dedicated in-region support and mentoring.



Ambassador O'Malley at U.S. Embassy Dublin Hosts a Creative Minds SXSW Send Off Event, April 8, 2015

# ADVANCEMENT

Foreign Service Rank Scheme



The 2008 “Getting the People Part Right” report highlighted several concerns about how PD officers were faring in the evaluation and promotion process. They noted that promotion boards were often critical of the lack of strategic vision in PD Employee Evaluation Reviews (EERs) and that PD officers were disproportionately focused on program management rather than public outreach. To a large extent, those same concerns were expressed in 2015, both in discussions with Human Resource Officers and with interview subjects. A key element of this perception relates to PD’s relatively poor performance in comparison to other FSOs in the “classwide” promotion competition.

The annual Foreign Service promotion system has in recent years offered two routes to promotion: “classwide,” meaning all Foreign Service Officers who are eligible for promotion compete with other FSOs at their level (i.e. FS-05, FS-04, FS-03) regardless of their cone; or “in-cone,” meaning all PD-coned FSOs who are eligible for promotion at their level compete with other PD-officers in their cone. Officers are first considered for classwide promotions. Those who are not promoted classwide are then considered for in-cone promotions.

As far back as 2008, State Department human resources data shows that PD officers have performed very poorly in the classwide compe-

titition. Over the past seven years, the average classwide promotion rate was 4 percent for PD officers compared to 8 percent overall. In the qualitative research for this report, this poor performance was attributed to the assertion that PD Employee Evaluation Reviews (EERs), which provide the basis for promotion decisions, have been too focused on how PD officers manage programs and do not explore how their work fits into the larger strategic picture for U.S. foreign policy.

While this is possible, the reality, as detailed below, is that PD promotions in-cone have been so rapid in recent years that the poor relative classwide promotion rate has been irrelevant to the overall promotion prospects of PD officers. It is therefore difficult to measure whether the perception of inadequate PD evaluation reports represents a real problem.

## Entry- to Mid-Level Advancement (FS-04 - FS-03)

Public diplomacy FSOs crossing from the entry- to the mid-level have been promoted in line with their peers. They are promoted at the same rate and have the same number of years of experience in the Foreign Service as those in consular, economic, management and political cones. Since 2008, their grade FS-04 to FS-03 promotion rate is at 53 percent, while the mean promo-

tion rate for this level for all cones is 56 percent. Similarly, their time-in-service before promotion is on par with their peers, at 4.7 and 4.8 years respectively. If this trend continues, there is little cause for concern.

### Mid-Level Advancement (FS-03 - FS-01)

At the mid-level, the promotion rates tell a different story. Though PD officers have not competed well in classwide promotions at the FS-03 and FS-02 grades, they have been promoted overall at a higher rate than any other cone. This means that they are being promoted faster than their peers. However, even though PD officers at these grades are getting promoted at higher rates, in real numbers PD is promoting the fewest officers, in some years as few as half that of the political cone. This also means that PD officers are being promoted earlier in their careers. Since 2008, for example, newly promoted FS-01 PD officers had an average of 3.8 fewer years of total experience than their counterparts.

In large part, this is due to a system that is structured to promote FSOs to fill the number of vacancies in the rank above. The same proportion of officers may be recommended for promotion across all cones, but the actual number of those promoted will depend on the number of authorized promotions per cone that are available according to human resource's staffing models. For a number of years there were numerous PD vacancies at the midlevel due to the fact that the U.S. Information Agency stopped hiring new officers in the 1990s, before the merger. Therefore, State Department HR authorized a higher proportion of promotions for PD officers recommended for promotion by review panels (Scenario C in Figure). This has happened so quickly that a human resources official reported that recent promotion boards have not found enough officers deemed qualified for promotion

to fulfill the HR quota creating worries that Panels would be asked to lower standards (Scenario B in Figure).

Future promotion rates for PD officers will be hard to predict. On the one hand, HR has announced the end the classwide promotion option beginning with the 2016 promotion cycle. Therefore, PD officers will soon only compete against each other. On the other hand, HR is predicting that officers of all cones will be confronted by a period in which assignments and promotions will be much more competitive and promotions slower as the "pig in the python" cohort works its way up the career ladder.<sup>20</sup>

### Mid- to Senior-Level Advancement (FS-01 - Counselor)

Like mid-level officer promotions, PD-coned FSO promotions to senior ranks (Counselor, Minister Counselor, Career Minister, and Career Ambassador) are diverging from the rest of the Foreign Service. According to State Department Human Resources, PD officers promoted over the Senior Foreign Service threshold since 2008 have spent an average of seven years at grade

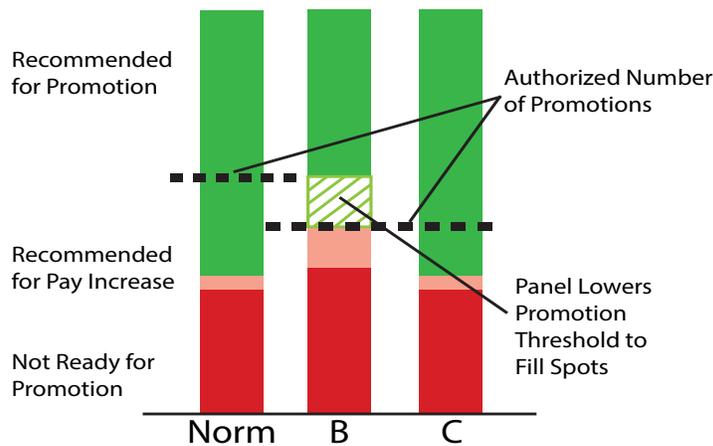
compared to six years overall. This slowdown may be due to faster promotions at lower grades, which results in a catch up period when crossing the threshold. This is supported by the fact that PD officers crossing into the senior threshold have an average of 20 years of total service, the same as the overall (classwide and

conal) average.

However, PD continues to fare very badly in promotions to the most senior levels. Despite representing one-fifth of the Foreign Service and

<sup>20</sup> Human Resources officials are currently revising the evaluation process. Details are not yet available, yet one key change would reportedly eliminate the class-wide promotion path, while a second one would shift promotion tenets from a competency-based to an effectiveness-based approach. It is unclear at this writing if these changes, should they go into effect, would be advantageous to the PD cone.

Promotion Trends: Are Standards Being Lowered?



17 percent of the Senior Foreign Service, there are no PD-coned officers who hold the rank of Career Minister or Career Ambassador.<sup>21</sup> Department-wide, only five to seven officers are promoted annually to the Career Minister grade. However, public diplomacy is the only cone that has not had any promotions to this level in recent years. In contrast, 22 officers from the political cone have reached Career Minister status since 2007 alone.

Becoming a Career Minister generally presupposes having at least served as both a Chief of Mission abroad and a Deputy Assistant Secretary in Washington. Thus, it would appear that PD's relative poor performance in competing for Chief of Mission, Deputy Chief of Mission and other assignments in the Department's senior management corps has a compounding effect on attainment of the highest levels of the Foreign Service. To be a Deputy Chief of Mission or higher, you must at least be an FS-02. Experience in these embassy front office positions are generally considered to be essential to reaching the highest levels of the Foreign Service ranks.

The 2008 report detailed how PD was considerably underrepresented in senior positions. The most recent data suggests that PD's ratio for attaching senior leadership positions has improved somewhat in recent years.<sup>22</sup> In 2014, for example, HR data shows that PD officers constituted 13 percent of those selected to be DCMs. However, PD officers were 18 percent of those bidding on DCM jobs. In other words, the assignment system continues to under-select PD officers for senior management positions.<sup>23</sup>

There is likely no single reason for these relatively low numbers of PD officers in senior level positions. Yet there remains a disconnect between PD work and the kind of experience that

<sup>21</sup> There has not been a PD-coned officer promoted to these ranks since 1999. Of those promoted 31 percent were political, 20 percent were economic, 15 percent were consular, and 17 were management.

<sup>22</sup> In 2008, according to the ACPD report, PD officers held only 7 percent of Department leadership positions, even though PD represented 17 percent of the Foreign Service.

<sup>23</sup> Ironically, in 1999, the conventional wisdom was that USIA officers would do well in senior level positions and be promoted to the highest ranks of Career Minister and Career Ambassador. The thinking at the time was that USIA officers possessed a blend of policy, programming, and management experience that was rare for State Department FSOs.

is perceived within the Department to be adequate preparation for senior leadership. While PD officers often amass considerable management and policy experience, the nature of that experience differs from what the Department believes it needs in senior leaders, which is the ability to work effectively within the bureaucratic processes of policy formulation in Washington. PD officers, however, tend to accumulate experience in the field managing embassy staffs.

During the focus groups and interviews with mid- and senior-level officers, sentiment was mixed about their opportunities for advancement into senior leadership positions and to the highest ranks of the service. Those interviewed who had successfully made the leap to non-PD senior leadership positions emphasized the benefits of such service both to the Department and to themselves. Serving as a DCM, one noted, had made him a better PD officer because of the new perspectives he had developed. However, some mid- and senior-level PD-coned officers have preferred to stay in PD assignments in the field rather than pursue out-of-cone assignments that would support their promotion. In the focus group discussion with senior-level PD FSOs, many expressed the view that senior PAO work was far more interesting and rewarding than being a DCM.<sup>24</sup>

Of course it is also true in general for other cones that the path to senior posts lies in taking assignments outside of the cone. Yet there is a difference for PD officers: The consular and management cones have well-structured functional tracks that allow their officers to reach senior leadership levels within their cones. Unlike PD, there are or have been consular and management cone Career Ministers. Political and economic officers, meanwhile, do not entirely leave their cone when they enter a senior leadership position. Since the traditional core of the State Department is government-to-government relations, political and economic officers already focus on those issues at the mid-level, long before they are candidates for senior level promotion. To

<sup>24</sup> Others indicated that they were particularly inclined to serve out of cone while assigned to Washington, in part because junior and mid-level PD jobs there are often perceived to be uninteresting and less relevant, especially in ECA, IIP, and even in the PD offices of regional bureaus.

put it another way, a political cone ambassador can be successful while keeping his public diplomacy work and understanding to a minimum, but a PD cone ambassador will fail if he does not become adept at political priorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use the advancement slow down to increase training and build the professional knowledge foundation for PD:** Traditionally, the Foreign Service has relied on “learning by doing.” This has been undermined in recent years by rapid promotions, early consular tours, and the rapid expansion of the work force. This is a particular problem for PD: While many higher education institutions teach traditional foreign policy courses, very few teach how public diplomacy tools

contribute to foreign policy. The predicted slowdown in promotions, and the possible shortage of positions at the mid-level, offer an opportunity for the State Department to provide more career development opportunities for officers. (See: Training and Education section). This will require funds that are scarce. It will also, however, require an institutional commitment to career development about which there is not a Department consensus at the present time. The Department’s current approach is for the individual to proactively grow his or her career. For PD professionals to meet the needs of the Department, it will be important to ensure that their professional training needs are given more priority, even as they continue to serve as generalists.



Secretary of State John Kerry examines goods made by a textile worker in Antigua, Guatemala, on June 5, 2013.



U.S. Embassy Brazilia, Sports Visitor Program Eco Fest, April 26, 2014

# PUBLIC DIPLOMACY & POLICY DECISION-MAKING

The 2008 report stated that while a widely accepted rationale for absorbing USIA into the State Department was to bring public diplomacy closer to foreign policy decision-making, it had failed to do so. ACPD based its conclusion in part on the PD cone's very low representation in senior-level positions. For example, the 2008 report noted that only one PD officer was serving in an Assistant Secretary-equivalent position and that only 3 percent of serving Ambassadors were from the PD cone. Today, there are no PD officers serving in Assistant Secretary-equivalent positions and only 4 percent serving as Ambassadors.

Seven years later there are some signs of improvement. As mentioned, 13 percent of recently selected Deputy Chiefs of Mission were PD-coned. This is a positive sign for the future, in that DCM positions are an essential checkpoint on the path to senior service in the Department. On the other hand, other data suggests that PD is still not widely present as a professional skill-set at the policy-making table in Washington. Specifically:

- PD is the only cone not to have a career FSO represented at the Career Minister level. No PD-coned officer has been promoted to Career Minister or above in the past 16 years since. In the last seven years alone, 22 political-coned officers have reached Career Minister.
- PD is the only cone that has no officers currently serving at the Assistant Secretary level. These positions in the ECA, PA and IIP bureaus currently are held by political appointees.<sup>25</sup> Since the merger, only one PD-coned FSO has ever served in an A/S

<sup>25</sup> Due to the congressional cap on Assistant Secretaries, the head of the International Information Programs Bureau is a Coordinator and not an Assistant Secretary.

equivalent position, and that was the Coordinator for IIP.<sup>26</sup>

- The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has never been filled by a career FSO. This is in great contrast with the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, where career officers and appointees have alternated with regularity. Remarkably, the only career acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs ever named was a political-coned FSO.

These statistics are due to a host of factors. Collectively, however, they indicate that public diplomacy as a profession continues to exist at the margins of foreign policy decision-making in Washington. PD may be closer to policy making, but for the most part, experienced, professional practitioners of PD are not in positions to exert strategic direction and leadership over the conduct of public diplomacy. The highest-ranking PD-related assignments they can aspire to are as deputies to the decision-makers, whether in a functional or regional bureau.

<sup>26</sup> An FSO has served as an A/S of Public Affairs, but he was a political-coned officer.

# CONCLUSION

In some respects, public diplomacy professionals at the State Department are doing quite well. The officers interviewed for this study seem reasonably pleased with their choice of professions and were invariably happy to be PD officers. The work, especially in the field, is interesting and generally rewarding. Recently, their promotions have been rapid.

However, when the conversation turned to public diplomacy at an institutional level, the tenor of the conversation often changed. The bulk of senior-level interview subjects believed that declining experience levels, coupled with limited opportunities for training, professional education, and mentoring, were a serious problem for the profession, and one that could worsen in coming years. The majority of all interview subjects believed that there were significant institutional barriers to implementing long-term PD more effectively. This was in large part because the post-merger structure of PD has disbursed authorities and resources needed for PD so widely throughout the Department that it is difficult to effectively plan, resource, implement and measure a PD strategy effectively at a macro-level.

In this sense, the problem may be that the integration of the PD function into the State Department has gone too far. Inasmuch as addressing publics is fundamentally different than addressing governments, PD needs to have the capacity for a certain freedom of action that it does not currently have. PD should not be reduced only to messaging alone. It is the only arm of the U.S. government that has the tools and the motivation to focus on cultivating and maintaining long-term relationships with the foreign publics who are increasingly influential in global affairs. However, in a Department coping daily with immediate global crises, it is far too easy to overlook this.

Public diplomacy needs a functional home in the Department to clarify missions and develop comprehensive and long-term strategic responses. Fortunately, there is enormous talent in the Department's public diplomacy corps. The challenge is to empower it. Here, the Department's PD community could learn from the U.S. military and as well as many institutions outside the government that are thinking innovatively about how to develop and hone strategic thinking. By using a rigorous doctrinal approach and developing a cadre of strategic PD planners, the Department can become more ambitious and effective in applying public diplomacy tools through the Office of Policy, Planning and Resources (R/PPR). This will help guide PD officers in implementing information and engagement activities, and other officers in understanding and appreciating PD's role.

However, PD also needs more resources and attention invested in its HR and education systems so that the all PD professionals can effectively carry out their work. The most significant thing we can do today to ensure more effective public diplomacy is to invest in our professionals; identify and select officers who could meaningfully contribute to foreign public engagement activities; consistently build up their professional knowledge base; and afford them the opportunity to lead the Department in conceptualizing innovative and ambitious strategies that reflect today's foreign policy opportunities and challenges. This is especially critical if we are to recruit and retain new generations of talent to advance U.S. foreign policy's short- and long-term objectives.

Public diplomacy needs special focus, but it should not be isolated in the State Department. The U.S. military would never merge the day-to-day management of the different services, their

weapons, or oversight over the career paths of the officers who oversee them. DoD understands that different services require different skillsets. Looking closer to home, public diplomacy could benefit from a structure similar to that of the consular cone, which has achieved a remarkable unity of mission, training, and esprit de corps. Yet the consular cone has two significant advantages over PD: the existence of a functional “home” in the Consular Affairs Bureau, where a professional leadership has provided continuity and leadership, and a resource base that can fund robust training opportunities.

While there are no easy remedies to those structural and funding dilemmas, PD can be strengthened by a combination of an expanded role for R/PPR; the empowerment of PD professionals to provide leadership through a rigorous, doctrinal approach; and increased understanding at all levels that PD is more than just a messaging arm of policy.



U.S. Embassy Pretoria, May 28, 2010





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